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ABSTRACT

This teacher's guide accompanies a videotape of the same name. Vice President Albert Gore, Jr., discusses current issues with students who question Mr. Gore on such topics as the environment, reinventing government, voter participation, crime, and the United States' role in foreign affairs. Gore tailors his answers to the teenage audience as the students share their concerns with him. The video can be used in government or other social studies classes, and can be particularly effective when used in conjunction with Close Up's supplemental book, "Current Issues." This teacher's guide provides tools for students to use in analyzing important issues of the day. Included are activities, student handouts, and suggestions for enrichment activities. (EH)

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Student Town Meeting

with Vice President Al Gore

Teacher's Guide

Developed by Amy N. Edwards

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The Close Up Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that encourages responsible participation in the democratic process through educational programs and publications in government and citizenship. Since its founding in 1971, Close Up has been committed to developing new and better ways for young people, teachers, and a widening circle of citizens of all ages to gain a practical understanding of how public policy affects their lives and how individual and collective efforts affect public policy. Close Up Publishing develops books, teacher's guides, and other materials designed to encourage critical thinking and inspire interest in current issues, government, foreign affairs, history, and economics.

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SO 026 412

Student Town Meeting

with Vice President Al Gore

Teacher's Guide

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To the Teacher

Vice President Albert Gore, Jr., discusses current issues with Close Up participants in this Close Up video, "Student Town Meeting with Vice President Al Gore." Students question Vice President Gore on such topics as the environment, reinventing government, voter participation, crime, and the United States' role in foreign affairs. The video can be used in government or other social studies classes, and can be particularly effective when used in conjunction with Close Up's supplemental book, *Current Issues*.

"Student Town Meeting with Vice President Al Gore" is a 24-minute question-and-answer forum that provides your students with insights on the vice president's perspective on various topics. Gore tailors his answers to the teenage audience as the students share their concerns with him.

This teacher's guide provides tools for students to use in analyzing important issues of the day. Included are activities, student handouts, and suggestions for enrichment activities.

Goals

The activities in this guide should help your students to:

1. recognize topics of current importance to government leaders and average citizens.

2. analyze the present administration's position on certain current issues.

3. understand the effects particular legislation has had on important issues.

4. predict future concerns of the Clinton administration.

Structure of the Lesson

The *"Student Town Meeting with Vice President Al Gore" Teacher's Guide* contains the following components:

Objectives

The student objectives include both cognitive and affective goals to help you measure student learning.

Key Terms

Key terms that will help students understand the concepts are presented in this section. The following activities will help reinforce student understanding of words and phrases used in this video.

1. Have a group of students develop a crossword puzzle using as many key terms from the activities and video as possible. Distribute copies of the puzzle to all students and have them complete it as a review exercise after viewing the video.

2. Divide students into groups. Assign each group five key terms, which they are to use in a rap song, a poem, or a short story. Ask students to present their creations to the class, making sure that their fellow classmates will be able to understand the meaning of the key terms from listening to the presentations.

Student Activities

The teacher's guide contains five student activities that require students to exercise their critical-thinking skills and do independent research. The activities also emphasize important information from the video.

Student Handouts

Student handouts can be reproduced for classroom use. Each is keyed to a student activity.

Enrichment Activities

After you have completed the study of the video, you may want to use one or more of the enrichment activities to give students a sense of closure. These activities will help students synthesize and evaluate the information they have learned and reinforce the scope of these current issues.

Student Activities

Objectives

After completing the following activities, students should be able to:

1. identify and discuss current issues on the American agenda.
2. form an opinion on certain present-day concerns.
3. analyze decisions made by members of the Clinton administration.
4. speculate about future topics of importance to government leaders.

Key Terms

biodiversity
Brady bill
Clean Water Act
environmental activism
Everglades
foreign aid
humanitarianism
intervention
privatization
recycling
reinventing government
Safe Water Act
Superfund
United Nations

Using the Activities

You may choose to show the video in its entirety before moving to the activities or you may want to stop after each of the vice president's responses and ask students to complete the appropriate activity. Activities are listed in this guide in the order in which Vice President Gore discusses the issues. Before showing the video, list on the board the topics that Gore will address. Alert students to jot down his main points about each subject while they are watching. Then, before getting into the activities, ask students what the vice president had to say about the topic they are about to examine. They should be clear about Gore's ideas and attitudes about each topic.

Activity 1—The Environment

Begin this activity by telling students that while serving in the U.S. Senate from 1984 to 1992, Gore became an authority on environmental protection, writing the book *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit.* During his term as vice president, Gore has focused much of his attention on environmental issues. Next, ask students what Vice President Gore said about the environment and balancing economic growth with environmental concerns. Then, organize students into groups of equal size. Distribute copies of **Student Handout 1—What is Your Environmental Policy?** Tell each group to choose one local or national company and to study its environmental policies. They could research a fast-food restaurant, a large department store, a paper or lumber mill, a school, a hair-styling salon, a service station, a newspaper, or many others. Have students call a representative of the local company to arrange an interview, either in person or over the phone. Students should use the questions on the handout to conduct the interview. Give them one week to complete the assignment.

After completing their research, groups should prepare an oral presentation to give before the class. Encourage each group to make their presentations visual—using charts, pictures, graphs—as well as verbal. Groups should be prepared to answer questions from the rest of the students. Finally, create a bulletin board using the visuals from the group presentations.

Activity 2—Government Privatization

Begin by asking the class what Vice President Gore says about privatization and making government smaller and more efficient. Then, ask students to state, in a sentence or two, ways they think the government should be "reinvented" or streamlined. Write their responses on the board. Pause at each response and discuss pros and cons of students' ideas. Can the government workforce be significantly reduced in size? Can the military be made much smaller? Can government agencies be combined or eliminated?

You might want to ask several students to find a synopsis of Vice President Gore's report on reinventing government. Many newspapers and magazines published excerpts of Gore's report in their September 8, 1993, editions. What are his suggestions?

Some Americans have suggested privatizing the U.S. Postal Service. Some point to private delivery companies such as United Parcel Service or Federal Express as examples of where private industry has succeeded in performing a service similar to that of this sometimes troubled government agency. Arrange a class debate on the following statement:

The U.S. Postal Service should be turned into a private, for-profit company.

The affirmative side should speak first for a set length of time, followed by the negative side for the same amount of time. Each side should then be given one or two minutes for rebuttal of any points the other side mentioned. After rebuttals have been completed, ask the whole class which side "won." You may want to organize more debates on similar federal agencies that some think could be privatized.

Activity 3—Community Poll

Start this activity by asking students what the vice president said about voting and voter turnouts in the United States compared to voter turnouts in South Africa. Next, divide the class into groups of four or five. Each group should generate a list of reasons that people give for not voting. Then, have them circle those reasons that they feel are valid excuses. Some responses may be as follows: "My one vote will not matter much," "The lines are too long at poll sites," or "I forgot to register to vote." Are these valid excuses? Ask each group to discuss with the class how they would encourage citizens to vote.

Next, distribute five copies of **Student Handout 2—Community Poll** to each student. Urge students to ask five members of the community to participate. They should seek people of different ages, genders, occupations, and educational backgrounds.

When finished with the polling, have students compile their results, comparing the voter behavior of groups by age, gender, occupation, and educational background of the people interviewed. Do they see any patterns emerging? Instruct students to pay particular attention to the voting patterns of persons under 20 years of age.

Activity 4—The Gun Control Debate

The Brady bill—the Handgun Control Act—was passed by Congress in December 1993. Have the students research the history of the Brady bill, finding out about its name and background, its hurdles to passage after five years of debate, and its implications for the future. Students should find out more about the 1981 assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan in which James Brady was injured. Give students two days in the school or public library to conduct the research, using current magazines, newspapers, and encyclopedias. Each class member should then use this information to write a one- to two-page report. Included in the report should be Vice President Gore's thoughts about the issue as expressed in the video. Students should be prepared to read their reports in class.

Activity 5—U.S. Intervention: Good Idea or Bad Idea?

Begin by asking the class what Vice President Gore has to say about the United States allocating money for foreign aid. Do they agree with Gore? Then, distribute copies of **Student Handout 3—U.S. Foreign Aid Policy.** Have students read the text on the handout either silently or aloud in class. They should then complete the pro/con essay described at the end of the handout. Give students half an hour to complete the activity and have them share their responses with the class. Lead a discussion based on their essays. Should the United States reduce foreign aid? Why or why not? If so, how should the United States use this money at home?

Enrichment Activities

1. Since the 1960s, many environmental treaties and laws have been passed in efforts to protect the environment. Choose one of the following treaties or laws and have students write a one- to two-page report discussing the treaty or law.

Treaties and Laws:
Convention on Climate and Biodiversity (1992)
Convention on Climate Change (1992)
Clean Air Act (1990)
Montreal Protocols (1990)
Clean Water Act (1987)
Nuclear Waste Policy Act (1982)
Endangered Species Act (1973)

While researching the document, students should find out its history, its effects on the environment, and related treaties or laws. Ask for volunteers to read their papers in class.

2. Invite a speaker from an organization that encourages active participation in voting to speak to your class about the civic responsibility of voting. Speakers from groups including the League of Women Voters, the American Legion, or any political party would be appropriate. Have students submit questions to you a few days before the speaker comes to your classroom.

3. Several local and national associations and lobbying groups have published pamphlets and posters about gun control and the Second Amendment. Have interested students gather such information and share it with the class. Write the following addresses on the board to help them obtain information:

National Rifle Association
11250 Waples Mill Road
Fairfax, VA 22030

Handgun Control, Inc.
1225 Eye Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005

After the students gather information, lead a discussion about the way the material was presented by each organization. How did the groups highlight information that represents their side? For example, the National Rifle Association may present statistics that show that most licensed gun owners are law-abiding citizens, while Handgun Control, Inc., may point out that the United States has the highest number of handgun deaths in the world. Discuss how and why these groups present information that supports their beliefs. Close Up's 1994 video "To Keep and Bear Arms: Gun Control and the Second Amendment" is an excellent resource for examining both sides of this volatile issue.

4. Ask students to research and report on the federal gun laws that already exist. Such laws include the National Firearms Act of 1934, the Gun Control Act of 1968, and the Brady bill of 1993. They can gather much of the necessary information by writing the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, 650 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20226. Other students may want to find out more about existing state and local laws regulating firearms or ammunition. After they have gathered information, ask students to report their findings to the whole class.

5. Ask students to develop a visual display that will illustrate world poverty and U.S. foreign aid. It could be a poster, a chart, a collage, a series of pictures, or a combination of ideas. They may want to clip pictures and articles from newspapers and magazines, draw their own pictures and diagrams, or use some other method that will make the point. Emphasize that whatever they do, the finished product must convey a message that others can interpret.

Tell students that their visuals should illustrate major problems facing impoverished nations today that might require foreign aid. Such examples should show economic, political, and social problems. The visuals should also show the types of foreign aid the United States gives and its reasons for giving aid. Give students one week to complete this assignment. On the day that the visuals are due, ask each student to tell something about his or her project and then attach the visuals to the wall or to a bulletin board. Conclude by leading a class discussion about the visuals and the messages they convey.

Student Handout 1

What is Your Environmental Policy?

The vice president mentioned in "Student Town Meeting with Vice President Al Gore" that in recent years, many businesses and industries have been implementing measures to aid the environment, such as recycling materials or using recycled goods. Choose either a local or national company and find out about its environmental policies. To assist in your research, complete the questions below. You may add more of your own questions to tailor the assignment to the company you have chosen. After completing your research, prepare an oral presentation to give before the class. Make presentations visual—using charts, pictures, graphs—as well as verbal. Be prepared to answer questions from the rest of the students.

1. Does your company have an environmental policy that includes plans for reducing production of harmful by-products or for recycling? Describe this policy.

2. Does your company provide opportunities for its employees to recycle office materials and other waste? If so, what kinds of materials are recycled? Where are these recycling collection sites located?

3. If your company does not provide an opportunity for recycling, find out why it does not.

4. Does your company use recycled materials, such as recycled paper products? Give some examples. If not, skip to question 5.

5. Has this use of recycled products saved your company money? In what ways? How much money does your company save each year by using recycled products?

6. On a larger scale, does your company produce products made from recycled materials? If so, what are these products? What is the market for these products?

7. Are company executives pleased with the recycling efforts of company employees? How is this shown? What steps, if any, are being taken to increase participation in the recycling project?

8. Does your company use any substances or produce any by-products that can be considered harmful to the environment? If so, what are these products? What is being done to reduce these by-products?

9. Does your company promote recycling or environmental protection efforts in the local schools or in the community? If so, what program or projects does the company support?

10. Does your company have plans for other environmental projects? What are these plans?

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Student Handout 2

Community Poll

Survey five members of your community on their voting habits. Try to seek people of varying ages, genders, occupations, and educational backgrounds. Record this information in the spaces below. Check each person's response to the voting questions in the appropriate columns and for questions that require longer answers, write down the respondents' main points. After you have completed the survey, the class will compile the results and compare voter behavior of people according to their age, gender, occupation, and educational background.

Age _____ Gender _____ Occupation _____

Education _____

	YES	NO
1. Do you vote regularly?	❑	❑
2. Do people who do not vote have a right to complain about the government?	❑	❑
3. Should everyone be required to vote?	❑	❑

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
4. How important are television and other forms of campaign advertising in determining for whom you will vote?	❑	❑	❑

5. Why do you think that only half of all eligible voters actually vote?

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Student Handout 3

U.S. Foreign Aid Policy

Every year the United States and other industrialized nations send money and other forms of aid to countries that are struggling to feed their people and provide basic services. Such nations are collectively called developing countries. The United States often uses foreign aid to promote its own political or economic interests. For instance, aid can be used to influence the behavior of a recipient country.

In recent years, foreign aid programs have come under fire. Some critics point to the huge federal deficit and argue that the U.S. government spends too much on foreign aid. They think that taxpayers' money would be better spent on programs in the United States or not spent at all. Others say that foreign aid doesn't serve the purpose for which it was intended. They say that, for instance, some funds end up going to corrupt governments that do not fairly distribute it to the people who need it most.

At the same time, foreign aid advocates argue that richer nations, such as the United States, should give even more money for aid. They believe that nations in severe need undermine the well-being of all nations.

Foreign aid can be earmarked for three purposes: development aid, humanitarian aid, and security aid. Development assistance helps developing countries build roads, power plants, schools, and hospitals. For people in many poverty-ridden countries, U.S. humanitarian aid may make a difference between life and death by providing food and medical care.

Security assistance is designed to strengthen the armed forces and economies of friendly governments. American officials believe that security assistance helps ensure that governments of U.S. allies remain stable. Many people criticize the government's emphasis on U.S. security interests, maintaining that human need, not politics, should be the key factor when allotting aid.

Foreign aid can be a powerful tool in promoting American interests overseas. The biggest share of the U.S. foreign aid budget has been going to the Middle East, Israel and Egypt in particular, to help maintain peace there. Other—often poorer—countries currently receive less money because they are not considered as important to American security. Critics have said that this strategy is shortsighted. They argue that granting the bulk of foreign aid funds to Middle Eastern nations creates resentment among other countries against the United States. This imbalance, critics say, places some poorly developed democracies in danger of collapse.

Some authorities believe that foreign aid should go directly to people and countries most in need. Others want aid to go only to the most important political and military allies of the United States. Policymakers have many points to consider when deciding upon future foreign aid plans.

Using the information you have just read, write a pro/con essay debating the following statement:

The United States should reduce foreign aid.

Write a five- to seven-sentence paragraph supporting a reduction of U.S. foreign aid. Then write another similar paragraph opposing reduction of U.S. foreign aid. Make sure you state each of your positions clearly, giving several examples to support your claim.

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1994; 214 pages. $10.95.

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